



{It is perhaps not necessary to elucidate everything about the Metropolitan's [much debated](#) piece, "The Dogma of Redemption" [[archived pdf](#)

], before appreciating some of his most practical points. On the same note, from two of his saintly followers, see

[here](#)

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. A rich assortment from the Metropolitan's seminal writings on Dostoevsky is available

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(the first two items being also easily located in Dr. Ludmila Koehler's English translations). They are probably still relevant to all those interested in either a better understanding of Dostoevsky, or any of the above.}

[...] The assimilation of redemption by faith is regeneration, despite the notions of scholastic theology, which separates one from the other. The attentive observer of life will have seen cases of spiritual regeneration more than once, or may even have consciously experienced it in himself, if his piety was not innate, but was acquired after a temporary rejection of God and His commandments. Lutheran and even Russian theologians like to demonstrate regeneration by the parable about the prodigal son; but in this parable we are shown only the first step in regeneration — (with Lutheran theologians, the matter ends with this). The matter was accomplished more fully before the eyes of Christ's apostles in the person of Zacchaeus, who not only came to repentance, but also undertook the struggle of a decisive change of his life, for which reason the Lord said: "Today is salvation come into this house." This example is of special value because the regeneration of Zacchaeus took place under the direct influence of our Redeemer.

Some readers, especially priests, will have certainly witnessed similar actions of grace in the life of some person, but these events probably did not take place so suddenly, rather the person went through a lengthy struggle with repeated falls. What are the conscious influences under which such a struggle as this is accomplished? (By "conscious" I mean someone's deliberate effort to bring reason to one who has fallen, or to bring an apostate to the path of truth). There are three types of such influences: admonition, example and something greater, about which we will speak later.

A person who is not deeply corrupted, who believes and still prays, but who has gone astray, is sometimes brought to reason simply by exhortation and good example, but these means can help only such sinners as have not yet lost God's grace and can still stand up for themselves. Where, however, these means have shaken someone's soul very deeply (as for example the prayer of the traveller which [the harlot Eudoxia](#) heard through the wall, and because of which she later became a holy martyr) this is not accomplished by their own power, but by a power which is placed into them. This power is the force of regeneration, and by this power Christ has redeemed us.

"What?" the reader will exclaim, "You are ascribing redeeming power to mortals? Is there not only one Redeemer?" Of course, there is only one Redeemer, but by grace He grants a certain portion of this power to His servants and especially to His priests. You would not dare to reproach Apostle Paul when he says, "We are co-workers with God, and you are God's husbandry and God's building" (1Cor.3:9). And who does not remember these words of his: "Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers: for in Christ Jesus, I have given you birth through the Gospel" (1 Cor.4:15). So the apostle calls himself a worker of — more exactly, a participant — of the regeneration of the believer, and not

only of their regeneration, but also of their salvation: “I have become all things to all men, that I might in any case save some” (1Cor. 9:22).

We must first ascertain what is the inner power of a spiritual shepherd by means of which he works, or rather, mediates, the regeneration of a believer — for it is wrought by Christ and the Holy Spirit — so that we can answer the main question of our research: by precisely what means does the Lord redeem and regenerate us? Let us turn again to life around us, since it is easier to find among men like us a similarity to the apostle than similarity to Christ. St Paul’s words, “Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ” (1Cor.11:1), apply equally to the servants of God today. Zealots of piety have not vanished and there are still found men and women whose deeds are in harmony with the apostle’s words which have special reference to the moral influence which godly men exert (cp. 1Cor.10:33).

A word of instruction is good, and still better is an edifying example, but what is incomparably higher than these? What would we call that third force which we delayed to define for a time? This power is co-suffering love, this power is the suffering for the sake of another person, which sets in motion his regeneration.(*). This mystery is not so far from us: it is often fulfilled before our very eyes, and sometimes even through us ourselves (although we do not always comprehend it yet). As a power of regeneration, it is constantly spoken of not only in the lives of the saints and biographies of righteous shepherds, but also in stories of secular literature, sometimes with extraordinary depth and accuracy. Both speak clearly of the active, revolutionary and sometimes insuperable power of co-suffering love, although the first do not explain its relationship to Christ as our Redeemer, and the latter do not even understand it. As an old proverb says, “words instruct, and examples persuade,” but co-suffering love pours out a new life-giving power into a sinner’s heart if he does not purposely push it away. In submitting one’s will to the co-suffering love of one’s mother, one’s friend, a virtuous wife or a good spiritual shepherd, or of the Chief Shepherd Himself (1Pt.5:4, as did Zacchaeus), the sinner suddenly finds in his soul, not the former hopeless debility and the indestructibly deep-rooted vices against which he has perhaps struggled so frequently, but in vain, but an influx of new strength, a new, enthusiastic vitality or a holy indignation. That which had formerly seemed attractive to him becomes vile, and what had seemed burdensome and tedious now becomes beautiful and sweet. The former curmudgeon and robber exclaims: “Behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I will restore him fourfold” (Lk. 19:9).

We are, for now, pointing out the fact and we will offer the explanation of it later; but the fact — more exactly the law — of psychologic interaction [reciprocity] is present before us. Without a doubt, the co-suffering love of one who perceives the fallings of a neighbour with as much grief as if he himself were the sinner becomes a powerful force of regeneration. Sometimes it is expressed in admonitions, sometimes in tears or fervent prayers, sometimes in supplications to

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the one who has fallen. In all its forms, however, the effective cause is measured by the power of co-suffering love. This is always verified by experience. When, for example, you reprimand an unruly young person, your pupil or child, he stands there with a blank look, having only one thought: "I have to listen to this lecture!" You threaten him, but either he does not take the threat seriously, or he becomes angry. Realizing that reasonable arguments or threats are futile for moving his will, you either become angry (in which case, your cause is lost) or you are moved to compassion for the youth who is walking the path of corruption. You imagine yourself to be in his place and you are horrified at the fate that awaits him: expulsion from school, venereal disease, perhaps prison, social contempt and even suicide. Your heart has become filled with compassion and sorrow, and having fallen silent for a moment, you begin to speak in a different tone. You tell him of your own personal wavering, of the heavy toll of internal struggle you had to pay to correct your own errors, how embarrassed you are at recalling the coarse words with which you insulted your parents in your own youth. And then, the countenance of your listener changes. His obduracy is shaken, he is moved to compunction and tears, and makes promises of self-correction in response to your benevolent words. If you will always maintain the ability to treat the young person with such angerless, compassionate love, putting away self-love from your soul, then the Lord will say to you, "You have gained your brother" (Mt. 18:15). He will gradually be completely regenerated and his acquaintances will marvel, thinking that he seems to be a completely different person from the one whom they knew to be a disorderly, lazy, dishonest debaucher.

Some reader will object, "Permit me to ask what this has to do with grace, regeneration and redemption? You are telling us what takes place in secular life." We reply that this phenomenon may occur even in the lives of secular people, but in secular life, only the first glimmer of such a manifestation of God's regenerating grace is encountered. The more or less lasting and profound effect of such grace is brought to pass only by those who constantly pray to God and call on His all-powerful grace in all their dealings with their children, pupils or neighbours, banishing from their own hearts all vanity and worldly objectives.

It is difficult to reconcile this with the usual conditions of life in this world. That great Russian writer [Dostoevsky] who creates pictures of the spiritual regeneration of sinners in all his works, introduces in his novels such loving and compassionate people, not only from secular society (though some occupied secular positions, such as Prince Myshkin and the father of The Adolescent) but also he presented the schema-monk elder and the self-denying novice in the fulness of the grace-bearing nature. Dostoevsky went to lengths to prepare his readers to turn away from their prejudices against monastics, and in his earlier works, he focused attention not upon those who serve in the mystery of regeneration, but upon those upon whom it was bestowed, usually under the direct influence of Providence, that is, by means of disappointments, suffering, illness, impending death, and the like.

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On the other hand, in his last novel [The Brothers Karamazov], he portrayed the characters of two such examples of brotherly love — a youth and an old man in whom everyone who drew near to them experienced if not a transformation in soul, then at least deep moral stirring. And this was so for no other reason than that each one felt that he was dear to Elder Zosima, that the elder was, so to speak, entering into his soul and endeavouring to drive all evil out of it, and call forth every good thing to life. Here is how this is expressed in the Prologue for 29 May:

The elders have said that every man must do for his neighbours whatever he can. He must, as it were, put on his neighbour's flesh and carry his entire weight; he must suffer and rejoice and weep with him in every circumstance, or, in a word, he must be with him as if he shared the same body and soul. If some affliction befall his neighbour, he must grieve for him as for himself. For, it is written, 'We are one body in Christ,' and again, 'the heart and soul of the multitude of those who believed was one.'

If this is so, a reader may ask, then where is man's free will? Alas, it is present in all its potency. To be precise, the inner stirring just aroused can only beckon the soul toward a better life, giving it the hope of possible regeneration. The acceptance or angry rejection of this call depends on an action of free will. The inevitable and unavoidable influence of grace-bearing co-suffering love lies only in its leading the soul out of a condition of moral indifference, distraction and incomprehension toward a definite decision, to be with God or against God. Thus the righteous Symeon foretold of the Redeemer on the fortieth day of His earthly life: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rise of many in Israel...so that the mind of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk.2:34–35). Christ's words to Nikodemus have this same sense: "This is the judgment, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light" (Jn.3:19). The words which follow are especially significant: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin...now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (Jn. 15:22, 24).

Thus, contact with regenerating grace does not destroy one's freedom, but brings one to a decisive self determination to follow the path of good or evil, one's own justification or condemnation (see 1Pt.2:7, 8 and 2 Cor.2:15). John the Baptist, burning with zeal for the salvation of mankind, impelled many to a sudden decision to change their lives, and they asked, "What may we do [to be saved]?" (Lk.3:12). The same was true of Apostle Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37). Others, on the contrary, who heard the desert dweller preach, were filled with hatred toward him and roused up Herodias to cause his execution, to which the Saviour Himself bore witness (Mt.17:12).

About thirty years ago on Mt Athos, the great elder Jerome gathered about 2000 monks in the

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previously desolate St Panteleimon Monastery. He was distinguished by boundless meekness and compassion toward human weakness, yet all those who sinned or were heading toward sin felt that the elder's spirit was in some manner blocking their path and, at the very thought of him, they were brought to repentance and went to him for confession. But this was not always the case. Once, the elder was peacefully sitting near the monastery gates when suddenly an enraged monk ran up to him, seized his beard and began beating him. "What is wrong with you?" the elder inquired peacefully. "You do not let me live!" exclaimed the monk, who was wrestling with some secret temptations. "But I do not even remember your face," the elder said. The monk, however, was already at the blessed man's feet, in tears of repentance.

The great Russian writer Dostoevsky masterfully portrays for us this action of co-suffering love which divides people into those being regenerated and those being condemned. Unbelieving visitors of Elder Zosima were so moved by his meek appearance and words that some of them were filled with repentance whereas others were so filled with malice that for no evident reason they would violate all rules of decorum.

One ought not to be disturbed by the fact that, in explaining the sacred dogma, we make use not only of Sacred Scripture but also of examples from secular literature, the very mention of which creates an aversion in many spiritual readers. But what else can one do when there are so many readers who, only under great constraint, will read or listen to extracts from the sacred writings. Christ the Saviour Himself explained His teaching with parables drawn from everyday life and St Tikhon of Zadonsk wrote a whole book titled *Spiritual Treasure Gathered From the Secular World*.

And so we confirm the truth divinely revealed to us and confirmed by observation and the experience of life, that the principle and strength of moral regeneration is the power of co-suffering love. To a certain degree, it is found even in the nature of unregenerate persons, as in maternal love. But a deep and decisive regeneration of a beloved one can be produced only by one who lives by Christ and depends on His power to bring about this regeneration.

Such a disposition of co-suffering love is a grace-bearing fruit of a godly life and of nature (the love of a Christian mother, for example). It is accessible to lay people who live in God, but usually only in relationship to certain close relatives, to a pious, trusted teacher or to comrades in activity or fate (Nekrasov²⁶ takes an example from life in penal servitude); but in relationship to all people, the earnest of this gift is imparted in the mystery of ordination, something which our scholastic theologians have overlooked. St John Chrysostom, however, clearly expressed this in his precious words which completely convinced me that my "innovations" which I introduced as a professor of pastoral theology (1893–1900) coincide with the teaching of the

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Church and that I was not proceeding “as one beating the air” (1Cor.9:26). He says:

Spiritual love is not born of anything earthly; it comes from above, from Heaven, and is imparted in the mystery of holy Orders; but the assimilation and retention of the gift depends on the aspirations of the spirit of man.

The later Church father St Symeon the New Theologian agrees with Chrysostom in considering one worthy of priesthood:

... who so loves God, that on merely hearing the name of Christ, he is consumed with love and sheds tears, and who, moreover, weeps over his neighbour, reckoning as his own the sins of others, sincerely regarding himself as the chief of sinners, and who, knowing the frailty of human nature, puts his trust in the grace of God and the fortitude which comes from it, and who, inspired by its fervour, undertakes this task [the work of priesthood] because of his zeal — disregarding human considerations — and is ready to lay down his very soul for the commandment of God and love of his neighbour (Twelve Homilies, ed.1869)...

(*) [Author's Note:] Since Apostle Paul undertakes to save people, how foolish is the indignation of the Protestants (and our own Fr Neplyuev) about the exclamation, “Most Holy Theotokos, save us.” How foolish are they to forbid the calling of spiritual shepherds “father” as if obeying Christ’s words, “call no man on earth father” (Mt.23:9). In that case, Paul would have often transgressed the Lord’s commandment, and John even more so. Likewise, Stephen who even called the Jewish priests “father” (Acts 7:2), not to mention the fathers of old (cp.2—15, etc; Rm.4:16).

Excerpted from "The Dogma of Redemption" [[pdf](#)] , by Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky; editorial notes omitted.

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